MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Her Excellency Ms Kaja Kallas
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
and Vice-President of the European Commission
BRUSSELS

The Hague
6 May 2025

Your Excellency, dear Kaja,

I am writing to you in light of Israel's continued blockade of humanitarian aid and electricity supplies to the Gaza Strip, which is exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation; the decision by Israel's security cabinet to expand operations in Gaza, risking an even further decline in humanitarian conditions; statements by Israeli cabinet members about a permanent presence that alludes to a reoccupation of (parts of) the Gaza Strip, Syria and Lebanon; and the further worsening of the situation in the West Bank. The blockade is at odds with the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice. As you know, I am deeply concerned about these developments and have taken several measures in this context, including summoning the Israeli ambassador to the Netherlands.

As we reiterated in the EU position at the EU-Israel Association Council on 24 February 2025, Article 2 of the Association Agreement states that relations between the EU and Israel shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles.

Building on the two notes from the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights presenting his assessment regarding International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, and taking into account the abovementioned deterioration of the situation that has occurred since the last EUSR report was circulated, I would like to request a review of Israel's compliance with Article 2 at the earliest possible opportunity. Several colleagues expressed interest in this initiative and are currently considering their support for the request of a review.

In my view, the humanitarian blockade is a violation of Israel's obligations under International Humanitarian Law and thereby of Article 2 of the Association Agreement. I am aware that Israel is proposing a new system for aid distribution. Although many details are still unknown, this system does not appear to be compatible with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and would not allow for the unconditional and unhindered distribution of aid to people in need.

All of this merits a broader reflection on and discussion of our relationship with Israel. I will withhold the support of the Netherlands for extending the EU-Israel Action Plan pending a review of Article 2.

The abovementioned concerns do not in any way compromise the Netherlands' solidarity with and support to Israel and its people. We continue to stand with the families of the victims and the hostages taken by Hamas and express deep concerns at the conditions in which they are being held.

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I reiterate my position that Hamas must release all remaining hostages immediately to end their suffering and lay down its weapons. There is no place for Hamas in the future governance of the Gaza Strip. The Netherlands reaffirms its full commitment to Israel's security and to regional stability. With the best interests of the Israeli and Palestinian people in mind, the Netherlands will continue to work for a lasting solution that has the support of both parties, with the two-state solution as the basis.

Firm in the belief that we as the EU must take a proactive and resolute stance in promoting and safeguarding democratic values, fundamental rights and the rule of law – the core principles on which our Union is founded – I look forward to working with you on the matters outlined above.

Yours sincerely,

Caspar Veldkamp
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

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